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REPORT
OF THE
ROYAL COMMISSION
ON THE
COAL MINING INDUSTRY
IN THE
PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

1907



EDMONTON

J. S. E. RICHARDS, GOVERNMENT PRINTER

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ROYAL COAL COMMISSION.

COMMISSIONERS:

THE HONOURABLE ARTHUR L. SIFTON,
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alberta,
Chairman.

LEWIS STOCKETT,
WILLIAM HAYSOM.

SECRETARY:

EDMUND TROWBRIDGE.

COMMISSION.

(SEAL)

CANADA

GEO. H. V. BULYEA,

PROVINCE OF ALBERTA:

Lieutenant Governor.

EDWARD THE SEVENTH, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India.

To all to whom these presents shall come, or whom the same may in any wise concern, GREETING.:

WHEREAS in and by an order of our Lieutenant Governor in Council, bearing the date the Seventeenth day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and seven, provision has been made for an investigation by our Commissioners therein and hereinafter named with respect to certain matters relating to or affecting the coal mining industry in the Province, as upon reference to the said Order in Council, a copy of which is hereto annexed, will more fully and at large appear.

NOW KNOW YE that by and with the advice of our Lieutenant Governor in Council, We do by these presents, nominate, constitute and appoint the Honourable Arthur Lewis Sifton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the North-West Territories, of the City of Calgary; Lewis Stockett, of Bankhead, and William Haysom, of Coleman, all in the Province of Alberta aforesaid, to be our Commissioners to conduct such inquiry.

To HAVE, hold, exercise and enjoy the said office, place and trust unto the said Arthur Lewis Sifton, Lewis Stockett and William Haysom, together with the rights, powers and privileges and emoluments unto the said office, place and trust, of right and by law appertaining, during pleasure.

AND We do hereby under the authority of the Ordinance respecting Inquiries concerning Public Matters, being Chapter Twelve of the Consolidated Ordinances of the North-West Territories, confer upon Our said Commissioners the power of summoning before them any witnesses, and of requiring them to give evidence on oath, orally or in writing, or on solemn affirmation, if they are persons entitled to affirm in civil matters, and to produce such documents and things as Our said Commissioners shall deem requisite to the full investigation of the matters into which they are hereby appointed to examine.

AND WE Do hereby require and direct Our said Commissioners to report to Our Lieutenant Governor in Council the result of their investigation, together with the evidence taken before them and any opinion they may see fit to express thereon.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF WE have caused these Our Letters to be made patent and the Great Seal of Our Province to be hereunto affixed.

WITNESS: The Honourable George Hedley Vickers Bulyea, Lieutenant Governor of Our said Province, at Our Government House, in Our City of Edmonton, this Seventeenth day of May, in the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and seven and in the seventh year of Our Reign.

By Command,

(Signed) HAROLD W. RILEY,

Deputy Provincial Secretary.

ORDER IN COUNCIL.

COPY OF AN ORDER IN COUNCIL APPROVED BY HIS HONOUR THE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA THE
SEVENTEENTH DAY OF MAY, 1907.

Upon the recommendation of the Honourable the Minister of Public Works, dated May 16th, 1907, the Executive Council advise that pursuant to the provision of the Ordinance respecting Enquiries concerning Public Matters, being Chapter 12 of the Consolidated Ordinances of the North-West Territories, the Honourable Arthur Lewis Sifton, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the North-West Territories, of Calgary; Lewis Stockett, of Bankhead, and William Haysom, of Coleman, all in the Province of Alberta, be appointed Commissioners to enquire into, investigate and report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council upon all matters having to do with or concerning the relations of employers of labour to the labourers employed in the coal mining industries in the Province, and more especially in relation to the wages paid to the labourers; the length of time constituting a working day; the conditions, sanitary and otherwise, under which such labour is performed; the precautions that are or should be taken to avoid accident or injury to the persons so employed and the compensation of such persons or their dependants or representatives in the event of their injury or death while engaged in such employment, and in this connection to enquire into, investigate and report upon all circumstances tending to the elucidation of the differences between employers and employed in this branch of industry with the purpose so far as may be, of suggesting such solution or solutions for the fair settlement of such differences as the Commissioners may think proper to make; and further to make such enquiry and investigation as shall be found necessary by the Commissioners into all circumstances which may throw light upon or explain the scarcity in the coal supply which existed throughout some portions of this Province and the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba during the past Winter, and to report thereon to the Lieutenant Governor in Council; and that for such purpose or purposes the said Commissioners shall have power to summon witnesses before them and to require such witnesses to give such evidence on oath, orally or in writing or on solemn affirmation (if they are persons entitled to affirm in civil matters) and to produce such documents and things as the Commissioners may deem requisite to the full investigation of the said several matters hereinbefore specified, or any one or more of them, and that for such purposes the said Commissioners shall have the same power to enforce the attendance of witnesses and to compel them to give evidence and produce documents and things as exists in any court of record in civil cases in the Province, and that

the said Commissioners shall have power to do such other acts and things as are requisite to the proper carrying out of the objects for which they are appointed.

(Certified) M. J. MACLEOD,
Clerk Executive Council.

APPOINTMENT OF SECRETARY.

COPY OF AN ORDER IN COUNCIL APPROVED BY HIS HONOUR THE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA THE
SEVENTEENTH DAY OF MAY, 1907.

Upon the recommendation of the Honourable the Minister of Public Works, bearing even date, the Executive Council advise that Edmund Trowbridge be appointed Secretary to the Commission appointed to enquire into matters affecting the Coal Mining Industry in the Province.

(Certified) M. J. MACLEOD,
Clerk Executive Council.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION.

TO HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL:

The undersigned Commissioners appointed by Your Honour by Commission bearing date the 17th day of May, 1907, beg leave to report that they have held sessions of the Commission at Lethbridge, Frank, Coleman, Banff and Edmonton, and have examined eighty-eight witnesses, representing miners, operators, managers, medical men and railroad representatives, being in the estimation of your Commission a fair representation from practically all mines now in operation in Alberta and of the three railways at present doing business in this Province.

DUTIES OF COMMISSION.

By the said Commission your Commissioners were authorized to enquire into, investigate and report upon all matters having to do with or concerning the relations of employers of labour to the labourers employed in the coal mining industry in the Province, and more especially in relation to the wages paid to the labourers, the length of time constituting a working day, the conditions, sanitary and otherwise, under which such labour is performed, the precautions that are or should be taken to avoid accident or injury to the person so employed, and the compensation of such persons or their dependents or representatives in the event of their injury or death while engaged in such employment, and in this connection to enquire into, investigate and report upon all circumstances tending to the elucidation of the differences between employers and employed in this branch of industry with the purpose, so far as may be, of suggesting such solution or solutions for the fair settlement of such differences as the Commissioners may think proper to make; and further to make such enquiry and investigation as shall be found necessary by the Commissioners into all circumstances which may throw light upon or explain the scarcity in the coal supply which existed throughout some portions of this Province and the Province of Saskatchewan and Manitoba during the past winter.

SYNOPSIS OF EVIDENCE.

With reference to the various points referred to us for investigation, we submit a synopsis of the evidence with our opinions based thereon for your consideration.

(1) In regard to the wages paid in the coal mining industry, we find that employees of the mining companies are paid wages as follows:

Ordinary unskilled outside labour, \$2.25 per day;

Other outside employees' rates varying in accordance with skill, from \$2.50 to \$3.67½ per day;

Inside employees are paid rates varying from \$2.50 to \$3.50 per day in accordance with occupation.

The contract miners, which includes the bulk of those employed in the actual coal mining work, are paid varying rates of wages settled by agreement between themselves and the employers and differing in accordance with the particular places and system of work,—wages having been stated to range in individual cases from \$2.50 per day to \$12.00 per day, and as an average by the year the following list of mines report the rate of wages set opposite each one as being the average for the year:

Lethbridge.....	\$3.00 to \$5.00 per day.
<i>Taber Mines.</i>	
The Reliance.....	\$4.00 per day room men. \$5.00 per day entry men.
Consolidated Coal Co.....	\$3.50 to \$4.00 per day.
The Domestic Coal Co....	\$4.08 per day.
Canada West Coal Co....	\$52.00 a fortnight.
The Lambton Mine, Wood- pecker, Alta.....	\$4.00 to \$7.00 per day.
Frank.....	\$3.00 to \$4.00 per day. (Mostly day wages.)
Bellevue.....	\$4.79 per day.
Lille.	\$5.20½ per day.
Coleman.....	\$4.85 per day.
Bankhead.....	\$4.66 per day.
Morinville.....	\$4.25 per day.
Standard Coal Coal Co., Edmonton.....	\$4.25 per day.
Edmonton Coal Co., Ed- monton	\$3.50 to \$5.00 per day.
White Star Coal Co., Strathcona.....	\$4.00 to \$5.00 per day.

Your Commissioners are of the opinion that legislation in regard to rates of wages would not be of any advantage in the present condition of affairs.

AS TO FORTNIGHTLY PAYS.

In regard to the frequency of payment of wages, the evidence given upon the part of the miners was practically unanimous in favour of payment being made at least every two weeks, which is the custom in a few of the mines. The evidence of the operators connected with the other mines was largely in opposition to this system and in favour of the monthly payment of wages as at present in vogue in their mines. Evidence was given in regard to other countries, that the custom in England varied from a week upwards, Nova Scotia two weeks, British Columbia monthly, and in the United States, fortnightly and monthly, but no evidence was produced in regard to Alberta that would show a distinction upon this question between miners and other classes of employees throughout the Province; and your Commissioners are of opinion that any legislation on this subject should be preceded by an enquiry into the conditions generally in regard to employees throughout the Province.

Evidence was given by the miners very largely in favour of a system of payment for coal by run of mine, while the evidence of the operators was generally speaking in favour of a system for screen coal where such coal was used for domestic purposes and sold upon a screened coal basis. In practice this system is only used, so far as the evidence shows, at the Lethbridge mine, and is said to be there taken into consideration in arriving at a basis of payment. The majority of your Commissioners do not feel justified in making a recommendation which could only apply to one class of coal, feeling that legislation in the interests of miners should be such as would be of general benefit to the miners in the Province, leaving matters which only refer to individual mines to be settled by an agreement.

WORKING DAY VARIES.

(2) Your Commissioners beg to report that the evidence shows that the length of time constituting a working day in the Alberta mines varies considerably. The large proportion of the men engaged in the work of getting out coal work not more than eight hours per day, those under contract to a certain extent regulating their own hours. In some mines this eight hours is reckoned from the time of entering the mine to the time of return to the surface, known among miners as a bank to bank day of eight hours. In others the eight hours is reckoned from the time of actually commencing work in digging coal or at such form of employment as they may be engaged in, and is exclusive of the time taken in entering the mines and getting to the place of actual work and returning from the same, which is known among miners generally as eight hours at the working face. In other mines a half hour is taken in the middle of the day for eating dinner at a regular time, and the eight hours is calculated exclusive of this half hour. In some mines in the Edmonton and Taber districts an hour is taken in the middle of the day for dinner, these being generally speaking new mines where they have not gone to any special depth, and the men come to the outside to eat; and in one or two small mines the miners actually work nine hours per day. The other classes of labour inside the mine work from eight to ten hours per day. Outside employees generally work ten hours per day and in some special cases they work eight or twelve. The general bulk of the men engaged in the transportation of coal from the place where the coal is cut to the outside of the mine work eight hours at the working face with an intermission at noon, but in some cases they work eight hours without an intermission for dinner, and in two or three mines the transportation men work only eight hours bank to bank. These hours are a matter of custom or agreement between the men and their employers.

The evidence given before your Commissioners by miners has been unanimously in favour of an eight hour bank to bank law for all persons engaged inside the mine, while the evidence given by operators while generally favouring an eight hour bank to bank law for those persons engaged in the actual digging of coal, estimated to be from seventy-five to eighty per cent. of those engaged in working inside the mines, has averaged from eight hours' work at the face with half an hour intermission for dinner to ten hours' work with one hour inter-

mission for noon, and is applicable to the class of men generally known as transportation men, estimated from twenty to twenty-five per cent.

Your Commissioners regret that they are unable to make a unanimous recommendation in regard to this matter.

BATH HOUSES AND VENTILATION.

(3) In regard to the sanitary conditions of the Alberta mines, your Commissioners find by the evidence that in all the larger mines the conditions are favourable to health so far as is consistent with the nature of the employment. In some of the smaller mines, which are ventilated by natural means, the air owing to the conditions of atmosphere outside varies considerably, and is in some cases responsible for the temporary closing of those mines. In this respect your Commissioners recommend a closer inspection of some of the smaller mines with a view to the improvement of the conditions.

Your Commissioners also find by the evidence that some of the mines are not conducting bath houses for the use of the men, and would recommend an amendment to The Coal Mines Act making the erection of bath houses at the mine compulsory.

Your Commissioners would recommend in reference to the employment of boys in the mines that the minimum age should be sixteen years. Their conclusions being based upon evidence given by a large number of miners and the opinions of physicians who have had much experience in connection with the health of miners.

FOR PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTS.

(4) In regard to the precautions which should be taken to avoid accidents or injuries to persons employed in or around mines, your Commissioners would recommend that The Coal Mines Act should be so amended as to provide that all necessary timber required for the use of miners should be brought as near the working face as practicable, and in no case further away than the nearest cross cut to the working face.

Your Commissioners would further recommend an amendment in regard to the distance between the first and second openings to the mine, which should not be less than one hundred feet.

Your Commissioners would further recommend that the Inspector upon each visit to the mine make a thorough inspection and post up immediately in a convenient place at the mouth of the mine a synopsis of his report, showing the places visited and the condition in which they were found, and that he insist upon the strict enforcement of the present provisions of The Coal Mines Act.

In regard to the advisability of issuing certificates to miners after examination, a large amount of evidence in the nature of opinions has been produced before your Commissioners, the miners being almost unanimously in favour of the system while the operators are just as unanimously opposed to it. No actual evidence has been produced to show whether accidents have been caused by the lack of such certificates, and therefore a majority of your Commissioners are not prepared to recommend legislation upon this subject.

COMPENSATION COMMISSION.

(5) In regard to the compensation of persons injured in mines or the dependents or representatives of persons killed in mines, your Commissioners would report that the evidence taken demonstrates that the provisions of the present law, while they may be fair in theory, are in practice useless; that the expense necessary to conduct litigation under the present system of trial by jury and with the consequent appeals and long delays has in the past rendered it impossible in almost every case for any compensation to be recovered regardless of where the blame might rest, and your Commissioners would therefore recommend that this class of cases be treated by a Special Compensation law, providing for the trial of accident or negligence cases by a Special Commission, appointed in such a way as your Government may seem fit, whose duty it shall be to hear and determine finally all such cases as may be brought to their attention without appeal.

CAUSE OF COAL SHORTAGE.

(6) In regard to the question of scarcity in the coal supply during the last year, your Commissioners have so far as possible enquired into the circumstances and find a number of different causes which have affected the supply. The strikes occurring in Alberta and the neighboring Province of British Columbia, cut off the supply of a large quantity of coal that would probably under other circumstances have been available for use in the Provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The exceptional severity of the weather last winter was also responsible for a portion of the shortage, some of the mines having been compelled to close entirely for short periods and others could only operate with reduced tonnage and at a considerable extra expense, and also seriously interfered at times with the operations of the railways.

Your Commissioners also find that the lack of storage facilities at central points, not only increased the shortage of coal, but also militated against the profitable working of the mines in the summer and the earning of wages by the men regularly during the summer months.

Your Commissioners also find that the scarcity of mechanics and delays in getting material for the purpose of making needed improvements in connection with some of the larger mines was a serious factor in delaying development, and consequently prevented an increased supply of coal available for consumption.

Another reason given in partial explanation of the coal shortage was the fact that a large number of the miners, particularly in the prairie districts, have taken up homesteads and only work in the mines in the winter time.

Evidence was also given that a certain proportion of the shortage from some mines was due to the habit of some miners taking religious and other holidays in addition to Sundays and legal holidays.

Your Commissioners find in regard to a number of the newer mines, particularly in the Edmonton, Taber and Woodpecker dis-

tricts, a serious complaint on the part of the mine owners in regard to lack of sidings for the economical loading and shipment of coal, many of these owners claiming that their capacity for profitable sale would be very largely increased if they had been able to have secured sidings promptly, thus accounting for a proportion at least of the shortage in the coal supply.

Your Commissioners find that in addition to these causes a very large proportion of the coal shortage during the past year has been due to the lack of cars furnished by the railways. This shortage in many mines has been not only a serious source of annoyance and danger to the consumers of coal, but a very heavy loss to the operators and the men engaged in mining, who in the larger mines have been kept idle for a period averaging at least two months of working days during the last year.

Your Commissioners find that although this state of affairs was a little more serious during the winter that at some mines it continued to almost an equal extent in the summer, and is due to lack of transportation facilities, both cars and power on the part of the railways, as well as terminal facilities, and to a certain extent in some mines to the lack of bunker capacity, which would have enabled the operators to have kept their mines working until cars could have been supplied them.

Evidence has been given upon behalf of the railroad companies that lack of transportation facilities was due to their inability to purchase equipment, and that the lack of terminal facilities and the building of spurs was largely due to their inability to secure men and material to do the necessary work.

The railway people also claim that a strict observance of The Lord's Day Act would seriously interfere with the supply of cars in future, and in that way would curtail a supply of coal unless provided with a large additional equipment.

Your Commissioners would strongly urge in regard to the storing of coal that your Government should make every effort to induce individuals and companies, who are able so to do, to keep a supply of coal on hand stored during the summer for winter use. This has apparently in the past been absolutely neglected even during last year by large and constant users of coal, the railroads even not keeping any supply for more than four or five days' use, thus in case of any shut-down of mines, arising from any cause, apparently compelling the use of the daily output of domestic coal, which should be for the use of ordinary consumers unable to store their coal.

In addition to what can be done in this way, your Commissioners would recommend legislation in regard to the erection and licensing of warehouses, which would enable agents and dealers to better finance the purchase and storage of coal during the slack season.

In regard to the lack of sidings, your Commissioners would recommend that your Government take steps to investigate the several cases mentioned in the evidence, and where sidings are practicable, assist in placing the proper evidence before the railway authorities or railway commission to secure the erection of same.

In regard to the question of car shortage, your Commissioners would recommend that your Government should take all possible

steps towards compelling the furnishing of cars to shippers in Alberta, and would recommend such legislation as may be necessary to accomplish that end. Evidence has been given upon the question of what is generally known as reciprocal demurrage, and your commissioners are of the opinion that unless prompt compliance with the requirements of the mines of Alberta is otherwise made by the railroads operating therein that some such system is an absolute necessity and that your Government should take whatever measures as may be deemed expedient to accomplish the requisite purpose.

AS TO COMPANY STORES.

(7) *Company Stores*.—Evidence was produced before your Commissioners that at two mines there were strong suspicions on the part of the miners that stores were operated in the interests of the Company. This was denied by the Managers of the Companies in question, and your Commissioners do not feel that such evidence was produced as would warrant interference.

(8) *Incorporation of Unions*.—Evidence has been given both in favour of and against a law compelling the incorporation of unions. Upon this point we refer your Government to the evidence taken and express no opinion.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

ARTHUR L. SIFTON,
Chairman.
LEWIS STOCKETT.
WILLIAM HAYSOM.

Dated at EDMONTON, this First day of July, 1907.

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